

# ECUMENICAL PRESS SERVICE

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## All-German Church Sessions Banned in East Berlin


(Berlin) - The East German Government has refused to allow the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) to hold synodical meetings in both sectors of Berlin from February 12-17.

It was the second time in the last month that East German officials refused to grant permission for an all-German church conference to be held in both sectors. Earlier, the government turned down a request asking that some meetings of Kirchentag - the Evangelical Church Day Congress - be permitted in East Berlin next July (see EPS No.3).

In explaining its latest action, an East German Government communiqué said officials wanted to avoid "conflicts and complications...which would undoubtedly be caused by the gathering of leaders of the militaristic church".

The communiqué insisted that the decision did not constitute "interference with the inner affairs of the church", and that it had "nothing to do with the attitude of the East German Government to the church". It further stated that the action was not directed against "consultations between the churches in the two German states".





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"The East German state authorities will continue to give representatives of the church in the German Democratic Republic the opportunity to travel to Western Germany or to other countries for inter-church meetings and consultations," the communiqué stated.

However, it declared that the government could not permit "representatives of the NATO policy to use Berlin, the capital of the German Democratic Republic, as a basis for attacks on the country of workers and farmers and their peace policy".

The government's latest action will not involve the worship service to be held February 12 prior to the opening of the Synod in St. Mary's Church, East Berlin. However, refusal to permit the first session to be held at the church has made it necessary for church leaders to postpone the meeting until the next day when it will be conducted in Johannesstift in the western sector. Other sessions will also be held there.

West German newspapers reacted critically to the East German Government's latest action.

The independent daily, Die Welt, contended that the decision clearly shows that the government aims "to split the organization of the Evangelical Church into two parts and thus destroy the last visible link between the Federal Republic and East Germany". It said further that the prohibition belied "oft-repeated assurances from East Berlin that authorities there would not interfere in the inner affairs of the church".

Meanwhile, another Berlin daily, Tagesspiegel viewed the decision against the Synod as even more serious than that affecting the Kirchentag. It regarded the prohibition as a formal breach of the Four-Power Pact relating to Berlin, which guaranteed unity throughout the city for the church to preach its message and make its decisions.

EPS, Geneva.

#### Natal Churches Form Council

(Pietermaritzburg, Natal) - A Christian Council has been formed in Natal, Africa. The new organization resulted from an informal meeting of area ministers to discuss theology. From these first meetings grew a plan for a cooperative scheme to distribute milk in needy areas and similar plans which the group felt should be conducted under the auspices of a more formal body.

The constitution lists among the purposes of the council: "to promote fuller understanding between the churches and to assist the growth of ecumenical consciousness among their members".

EPS, Geneva.

#### 400 German Students Register for Volunteer Aid

(Hamburg) - Bishop Heinrich Meyer of Luebeck, chairman of the Commission for World Mission of the Lutheran World Federation, has reported that more than 400 West German Protestant students have registered for volunteer work in underdeveloped countries since the end of 1959.

At a meeting of the group's executive board here, Bishop Meyer said that the young university graduates will be assigned largely to serve as doctors, teachers and technicians. He stressed that it will be of decisive importance for them to practice their Christian faith in daily life if they are to aid in removing false concepts of Christianity among the peoples of the countries in which they will serve.





Bishop Meyer further announced that a joint study group of the LWF Commissions for World Service and World Mission will soon make a tour of Africa to map out with representatives of the young churches there practical plans for efficient development aid. EPS, Geneva.

#### Pax Romana Movement Takes Religious Freedom Stand

(Leopoldville) - African representatives attending the recent Second Pan-African Conference of the Roman Catholic Pax Romana Movement here unanimously adopted a statement affirming "the right of every man to religious freedom", according to L'Osservatore Romano, Vatican newspaper.

The lengthy statement on the religious situation in Africa declared that "the right of every man to religious freedom should be recognized and guaranteed by the state". It has been approved by Domenico Cardinal Tardini, Vatican Secretary of State, in the name of Pope John XXIII.

Pax Romana is a movement of Catholic scholars and students from all over the world and, as such, is a segment of Catholic Action, an organisation which is officially recognized by the hierarchy. EPS, Geneva.

#### Baptist Sees New Testament as Unity Basis

(Providence, Rhode Island) - A return to the New Testament offers "a more durable basis for Christian unity than any thus far advanced", a prominent Baptist clergyman has declared.

Dr. Homer L. Trickett, pastor of the historic First Baptist Church here, made the comment in a letter to Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, stated clerk of the United Presbyterian Church in the USA.

Dr. Blake had earlier proposed discussions by Episcopalians, Methodists, Presbyterians and the United Church of Christ with the view to the eventual merger of these denominations into a united body with close to 20-million members.

While Baptists were not specifically mentioned in Dr. Blake's merger proposal, he expressed the hope that representatives of these four bodies might draw up a plan "which any other churches of Jesus Christ accepting the bases suggested and the plan developed will be warmly invited to join".

In the letter, Dr. Trickett informed Dr. Blake that while Baptists believed their interpretation of Scriptural teachings "is the true one", they are not necessarily entrenched "in an impregnable, immovable position".

"We believe that God will yet cause further light to shine forth from the Scriptures", wrote Dr. Trickett, "and we are willing that it should shine on us as well as others."

However, he insisted that unity discussions "set against the background of church tradition and dogma are bound to be divisive rather than uniting".

"Christian unity cannot be achieved by the accommodation of one churchly tradition and dogma to another," he declared and urged that those discussing unity "put aside all churchly traditions, all creedal formulations, all pronouncements of church councils and ecclesiastical officers and begin with the Scriptures, especially the New Testament, as a sufficient guide in matters of faith and practice".





Then, he concluded, "Christian unity will become not only a possibility but a divine probability".

While he commended Dr. Blake for the "fine spirit of Christian brotherliness" underlying his proposal, Dr. Trickett took exception to three bases for union proposed by the Presbyterian leader. These follow:

One - The historic trinitarian faith received from the Apostles and set forth in the Apostles' and Nicene creeds.

Two - The historic episcopate as either necessary to the existence or reality of the Church or as an order of the ministry different in status or function from other ministerial orders.

Three - An understanding of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper "truly as a means of grace by which God's grace and presence are made available to His people", if by this is meant that sacraments have a power in and of themselves to work a change. (See EPS No. 5.)

EPS, Geneva.

### Missionaries Continue Work in Lower Laos

(Savannakhet, Laos) - Missionaries in southern Laos have been able to remain at their posts despite the continuing crisis in the small kingdom, according to reports published by the Far East News Service. It says missionaries are also still working at outposts along the Vietnam border and northeast of Thaknek and south to Pakse and Attapeu.

However, mission work in northern Laos has been virtually stopped and the last missionary couple in the area is expected to be withdrawn shortly.

The Rev. T.J. Andrianoff, a missionary of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, interviewed by a FENS reporter in Saigon, said he had evacuated his mission station at Xieng Khoang in northern Laos just before Communist forces entered the city. The Alliance is the only mission working in northern Laos.

Mr. Andrianoff said that no missionaries had been killed or seriously injured and that no mission property had been destroyed or stolen, at the time he left.

In southern Laos, FENS said, the government has imposed certain travel restrictions for security reasons, and requires passes which often take several days to obtain. But it said there was no discrimination against missionaries or other Christian workers who wished to obtain the passes

EPS, Geneva.

### Bishop Pike Scores Segregation "Heresy"

(San Francisco) - Protestant Episcopal Bishop James A. Pike of California has declared that segregation practices in Episcopal churches in Georgia represent a Christian "heresy".

Bishop Pike made the charge after 137 ministers of his diocese gave a unanimous vote of confidence following charges of heresy made against him by a group of Episcopal clergymen in Georgia.

The confidence vote was given prior to the diocese's 111th annual convention after the denomination's Tri-Convocation Clericus of Albany, Dublin and Thomasville in Georgia, accused the prelate of disbelieving "the Virgin Birth of our Lord, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity as stated by the Church and the necessity of salvation through Jesus Christ alone".







Bishop Pike strongly denied the charges, which were based on an article written by him for The Christian Century, an undenominational periodical published in Chicago.

Pointing out that he was "not much of a heresy hunter" himself, the bishop said that if the Georgia ministers bring charges against him before the Episcopal House of Bishops, he may advance the counter-charge that churches of the denomination are segregated in Georgia.

"Now there is a heresy worth discussing", he declared. "All men are equal in the sight of God. This is the clear and official teaching of the Anglican Church. Still 11 o'clock on Sunday morning is the most highly-segregated hour of the week - all over the country - but not in the California diocese."

EPS, Geneva.

#### Westphal Succeeds Boegner in French Protestant Post

(Paris) - Dr. Marc Boegner, 79, for 31-years the leader of France's Protestant community, has retired as chairman of the French Protestant Federation. He will be succeeded by the Rev. Charles Westphal, the vice-chairman for the last 12-years.

In announcing his decision to resign from the post, Dr. Boegner informed the federation's council that serious problems in central and northern Africa force him to devote his entire time to his work as president of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society, and as president of CIMADE, ecumenical service agency of French Protestant churches. He has held both positions for several years.

Mr. Westphal, pastor of the Church of the Saint-Esprit in Paris for the last 15 years, will be succeeded as vice-chairman by the Rev. Pierre Bourguet, president of the French Reformed Church.

Both Dr. Boegner and Mr. Westphal have been active in the ecumenical movement. Dr. Boegner, served as one of the presidents of the World Council of Churches from 1948-54, and is currently chairman of the WCC's Division of Ecumenical Action. His 64-year-old successor is a member of the World Council's Central Committee, and attended the WCC's Amsterdam and Evanston assemblies.

EPS, Geneva.

#### Bishop Protests Lay Administration of Sacraments

(Fribourg) - Orthodox Bishop Wasilije of Banjaluka has issued a pastoral letter condemning the administration of the sacraments by laymen because of a shortage of priests in the Orthodox churches of Bosnia, according to a report published by the International Catholic Press Agency (KIPA) here.

KIPA said a report from Belgrade disclosed that without the permission of church authorities laymen had administered Holy Communion, presided at baptisms, heard confessions, performed liturgical ceremonies, and recited the prayers of the church at sick beds and at funerals.

Bishop Wasilije assured members of his diocese that priests would be assigned to churches without pastors in the near future, the report stated.

EPS, Geneva.





### Cardinal Comments on Catholic-World Council Cooperation

(Hamburg) - Cooperation between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches may be possible in areas not directly concerned with dogma, a high-ranking Vatican official has declared.

Augustin Cardinal Bea, head of the Vatican's Secretariat for Christian Unity, offered this opinion in answer to a question put to him during an interview with the North-West German television network here.

Cardinal Bea said he saw no obstacle concerning cooperation with the WCC, composed of 178 Anglican, Protestant and Orthodox churches in the world, in such areas as social and charitable work and the promotion of world peace.

"What would it mean to mankind, for instance", the cardinal pointed out, "if all Christians would proceed unitedly with regard to such essential questions as atomic war, disarmament and the preservation and promotion of peace."

Clarifying the functions of his Secretariat, Cardinal Bea said it would be responsible for informing Protestant and Orthodox clergymen about the progress of the Second Vatican (Ecumenical) Council, tentatively scheduled for 1962, and for receiving suggestions from non-Catholic church leaders.

Pointing out that the council would work indirectly and slowly toward Christian unity, with a long range view, the cardinal noted that, apart from doctrinal differences, there exists a great practical difficulty because Protestantism does not have an authoritative counterpart to the Secretariat for talks and discussions.

Cardinal Bea said that one evangelical theologian had suggested to him that the Secretariat should negotiate with a group of Protestant clergymen. He said he was forced to reply that "this would be practical if he could tell me who on the Protestant side would have the authority to delegate such theologians and to make the possible results of the negotiations accepted in the Protestant world".

At present, he said, unofficial discussions continue to be the chief means of promoting Christian unity. EPS, Geneva.

### Lutherans Urged to Give Cooperation Top Priority

(Detroit) - Lutherans in the United States have been urged to give "top priority" to "putting in order their own household with respect to cooperation".

The plea was made here at the 43rd annual meeting of the National Lutheran Council by Dr. Paul C. Empie, its executive director.

Pointing out that "the fragmentation of Christendom" is being increasingly recognized as "a major hinderance to evangelism," Dr. Empie observed, "Contemporary world events together with ecclesiastical developments outside the Lutheran household have intensified the sense of urgency in Christian mission".

Dr. Empie noted that "failure to witness effectively to the world the oneness which Christians have in Jesus Christ has brought the judgement of God even - and perhaps especially - upon the Church itself".





A "hopeful" outlook has been created as a result of discussions between representatives of the National Lutheran Council and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, he commented.

Stressing that the "basic and central issues" dividing the two groups must not be "passed over lightly in order to meet a deadline", Dr. Empie added:

"One can make a case for separate synodical organization until these points of disagreement are resolved - though it is usually acknowledged that most if not all of these same disagreements exist to some degree within all Lutheran Church bodies."

But less easily defended "on the basis of Scripture and the Lutheran confessions", he continued, is "a position that differences in human judgement should prevent or forbid coordination or degrees of comity and cooperation between Christian groups".

EPS, Geneva.

#### Dr. Ramsey Urges Future "Courtesy Calls" With Catholics

(London) - Dr. Arthur Michael Ramsey, the Archbishop of York, has called for future contacts between Anglican clergymen and Roman Catholic priests.

Dr. Ramsey, who will succeed Dr. Geoffrey Francis Fisher as Archbishop of Canterbury, said in his monthly pastoral letter that Dr. Fisher's recent visit to Pope John XXIII "had the effect of suggesting to many people in different parts of the world that there was room for other 'courtesy calls' which had never been made before".

Pointing out that a thousand such calls can add up to a volume of friendship, respect and Christian concern, Dr. Ramsey said that the art to be practiced is "speaking the truth in love".

"Why should not Anglicans and Roman Catholics and others uphold their convictions as strongly as ever before, yet with the sting of bitterness, hatred and contempt removed?" he asked. "But each must speak the truth as he sees it."

EPS, Geneva.

#### Dutch Appeal Raises \$63,700 For Congo

(Rotterdam) - An appeal by the churches in the Netherlands for needy in the Congo has resulted in a nation-wide response which includes contributions of US\$63,700 and forty tons of rice, beans, milk and canned fish.

Only a small portion of the funds - less than \$4,000 - came from church sources. The remainder, says a report of the Committee of Inter-church Aid and Service to Refugees, "was the result of spontaneous action on the part of the general public".

The church appeal also was the stimulus behind the Dutch Government's decision to allocate \$265,400 worth of rice for distribution in the Congo, according to the report.

Response to the appeal got underway in a high school in Amsterdam where 800 students in five days collected 1,500 tins of milk and nearly \$8,000 by doing odd jobs in their spare time. Their example was followed by dozens of other schools.





In Zaltbommel, a small market town in the province of Gelderland, citizens made the rounds of homes and farms with trucks and lorries loaned by the city and collected three and a half tons of food and nearly \$500 in one evening. The collection was announced by the ringing of all the church bells in town.

College students in Amersfoort also organized a similar collection and announced it by dropping leaflets from airplanes over the town.

EPS, Geneva.

#### Pope Speaks to Catholic Clergy of Colombia

(Rome) - Pope John XXIII has counselled a group of Roman Catholic clergymen from Columbia to remember two evangelical teachings in their zeal to promote their faith at home, L'Osservatore Romano, Vatican newspaper, has reported.

The newspaper said the pontiff remarked that it was "a very good thing" to promote Roman Catholicism in Colombia, but he encouraged them to remember that "the progress of the Church should not be forwarded with human and material means, but with God's help who said: 'I am with you forever'".

The Pope further urged the Columbian clerics to realise that the worst temptation put to Christ by the devil was that of the ambition of power.

The Pope made his remarks at a recent pilgrimage to the Vatican by a large number of Columbian priests and bishops.

EPS, Geneva.

#### In Brief

The Very Rev. H. C. N. Williams, provost of Coventry Cathedral, recently spent four days in Berlin where he met with Bishop Otto Dibelius, president of the Council of Evangelical Churches in Germany, at the invitation of the Anglo-German Society. The purpose of the visits was to strengthen the contacts between Berlin and Coventry, which was practically destroyed by German bombs in the last war. (See. EPS No. 4, 1960)

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Death has claimed Janos Vasarhely, Reformed Bishop of Kolozsae and president of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in Roumania, according to the Hungarian Church News Service. The Reformed Church is the largest Protestant body in Roumania. Figures compiled in 1957 disclosed that it was composed of 780,000 members in more than 700 churches.

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Bishop Johann Wendland of East Berlin, the Exarch of the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church for Central Europe, recently visited Orthodox churches in Western Germany. While there, he met with Evangelical Lutheran Bishop Hanns Lilje of Hanover, and Dr. Adolf Wischmann, director of the Foreign Department of the Evangelical Church at Frankfurt-am-Main.

EPS, Geneva.

